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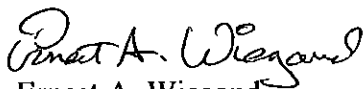
Testimony on the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism
Appropriations Committee Meeting of February 17, 2009

As a professional archaeologist, I can attest to the vital role the State Historic Preservation Office of the Commission on Culture and Tourism plays in the preservation and study of Connecticut's historic and prehistoric cultural resources. These include, but are not limited to, archaeological sites, buildings and other structures and cemeteries. These are unique and non-renewable resources that, once lost, are gone forever.

The proposed merger of the SHPO and CCT with the Department of Economic and Community Development may produce short-term "savings" through staff reductions, but it will do so at the long-term expense of the SHPO's mandated responsibilities to the management and preservation of the state's cultural resources. The elimination of personnel from what has historically been a small staff to begin with will hamper its review of federal and state agency projects that may impact archaeological sites and/or historic structures. This would result in the costly delay or even termination of such projects. The impacts of staff reduction thus will have severely negative economic as well as cultural impacts that our state can ill afford. In addition, the proposed merger could lower the necessary independence and visibility of the SHPO in ways that could greatly impede its mission.

It is for these reasons that I strongly oppose the merger of the Commission on Culture and Tourism with the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Sincerely,


Ernest A. Wiegand